ROB GALLAGHER
Concordia University – Montréal

From camp to kitsch:
A queer eye on console fandom

ABSTRACT

Offering a queer perspective on video game fandom, this article considers the factors that fostered a subculture of Western devotees of Japanese video games in the 1990s. Focused on readers of the English publication Sega Saturn Magazine, it shows how, for these players, Japanese games became the basis of a collective identity founded on precisely the kinds of perverse over-attachment, projective identification and hermeneutic ingenuity that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick identifies with camp. Citing this subculture as an example of how fans transform the texts they put to use, the article also addresses its implications for our understanding of fandom today, at a time when the proliferation of quantitative analysis techniques is transforming the production and consumption of games. Such techniques, I argue, threaten to compromise the contingency and ambiguity on which camp thrives, instead fostering the kinds of cynical calculation Sedgwick associates with kitsch.

KEYWORDS: *Fandom, Video games, Queer theory, Camp, Kitsch*

Video gaming is often considered a very male hobby, all guns, gore and cheap titillation. It may seem strange, as such, to associate game fandom with camp. If, however, we take Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) definition of camp as our benchmark — a definition that foregrounds "startling, juicy displays of excess erudition... passionate, often hilarious antiquarianism; the prodigal production of alternative historiographies; the 'over'-attachment to fragmentary, marginal, waste and leftover products... disorienting juxtapositions of present with past, and popular with high culture" (p.150) — then there are few camper moments in recent pop culture than the sequence in *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (1997) wherein Dracula quotes Andre Malraux before metamorphosing into a gigantic, fire-breathing demon. Indeed, the contradictoriness, perversity and excess that Sedgwick identifies with camp abound throughout the game, from that hammily grandiloquent subtitle to the castle's baroque vaults and secret passages to a soundtrack that vacillates between orchestral pomp and squealing rock.

While *Symphony of the Night'*s giddily promiscuous blend of cultural materials and representational registers is striking, it is also fairly typical of Japanese games of this era, and begins to make more sense when we consider the complexion of the 1990s gaming scene. As I will show, this remarkably dynamic period in gaming's history proved conducive to precisely the kinds of projective identification, enthused amateurism and felicitous mistranslation that Sedgwick identifies with camp, fostering a subculture of Western devotees of Japanese video games. Analysing this subculture through the lens of Sedgwick's writing, I hope both to draw out its implications for our understanding of game fandom today and to suggest that — the considerable value of empirical work notwithstanding — game studies might learn much from queer theory's amenability to ambiguity and ambivalence.

Camp itself is of course a highly ambiguous, hotly contested concept. Scholars customarily stress "the problem of defining (camp)" (Bergman, 1993, p.4), its inherent "slipperiness" (Cleto, 1999, p.2), its antipathy to taxonomies and hierarchies (Ludlam, 1992, p.226). Perhaps the best way to understand camp, in fact, is to review the questions that render its definition so problematic. Is camp about objects or attitudes, a style of production or of reception? Is it elitist or inclusive? And, by extension, is it about guileless reverence or a gleeful relativism that dictates "nothing can be taken seriously" (Dyer, 2002, p.145)? Isherwood (1954) differentiates "high" camp, elevated by its "underlying seriousness" (p.110), from a vulgar, parodic low strain — but by admitting straight artists to the camp canon he raises the thorny issue of camp's relation to homosexuality. Can heterosexuals participate in camp, or is it "solely a queer (and/or sometimes gay and lesbian) discourse" (Meyer, 1994, p.1)? Does camp signal complicity with a homophobic mainstream, or does it subvert straight culture from within (Halperin, 1995, p.29)?

Part of the problem is camp's overlap with the equally embattled concept of taste. Gigante (2005) frames the story of European taste as a shift "from neoclassical principles of correctness to feeling as foundation for aesthetics" (p.58), from Hume's belief in sedulously removing "impediments to a correct judgment of taste" (p.55) to today's hypersensory culture, in which Lash (2002) claims "critical distance" is impossible (p.174). Of course, this necessarily simplifies things: the last few decades alone have seen Bourdieu's (1984) reduction of taste to marker of socioeconomic status, social constructivist attacks on the prejudices enshrined in notionally meritocratic canons and, latterly, the emergence of neuroaesthetics (Stafford, 2007). To consider camp is to grapple with similar issues: is camp about cultivating a taste for objects less refined palates would reject as cloying or offensive, or is it about indulging our passion for that which we know to be inferior but enjoy nevertheless?

Sedgwick takes a stand on some of these questions, associating the idea that camp entails "self–hating complicity with the status quo" with paranoid thinking (2003, p.149) and deconstructing the homo/hetero binary in a way that problematizes Meyer's distinction between authentic camp and straight approximations and appropriations thereof (2008, pp.9-10). For the most part, however, she is not interested in resolving camp's productive ambiguities, and nor am I. Instead, I want to show how Sedgwick's conception of camp, with its focus on the uses to which audiences put cultural texts and the attempts of cultural producers to predict and recuperate that usage, can inform our understanding of video game fandom. I begin by sketching some of the factors that fostered a culture of camp game fandom in the 1990s, before zooming in on one of the vectors for this culture's spread: EMAP publishing's *Sega Saturn Magazine*. Drawing on Hills (2002) and Hebdige (1979, 1988) I show how this publication helped its English audience not just to acquire, play and appreciate Japanese games but to fashion a subcultural identity on this basis. The final part of the article turns to today, proposing that contemporary gaming culture risks shifting away from camp and toward kitsch, a term Sedgwick reserves for cynical and contemptuous modes of production and consumption, concerned not (as camp is) with discovering points of commonality amid difference, but with mocking and exploiting the ostensible credulity and ignorance of others.

LOOKING BACK

The 1990s saw dramatic changes for console gaming. 32- and 64-bit systems facilitated a transition from 2D imagery toward polygonal 3D gameworlds, while the increasing ubiquity of save-game facilities allowed for longer, more complex games. Joypads acquired triggers, screens, analogue sticks and haptic feedback, and the move to cheaper, roomier optical storage formats enabled multimedia spectaculars like *Final Fantasy VII* (1997), which mingled pre-rendered images with real-time 3D while incorporating full motion video and CD-quality audio. Sony's canny marketing of the PlayStation, meanwhile, helped to diminish gaming's social stigma, attracting a broader, older audience (Newman, 2013, p.57) and letting developers experiment with new genres. The pace of change meant orthodoxies had little time to coalesce, and interdisciplinarity, autodidacticism and improvisation often carried the day. This resulted in software ripe for camp appreciation, as designers' enthusiasms, specialisms and frustrated ambitions manifested themselves in strange indulgences, sly repurposings, and cryptic in-jokes. This is not to suggest the era saw a clean break with gaming's past, however. Here *Symphony of the Night* is again typical: a hybrid, it built on its 8- and 16-bit predecessors by integrating 3D graphics, cutscenes and high fidelity sound, while borrowing concepts from role-playing games and *Super Metroid* (1994).

Significantly, this was also a time when Japanese platform holders controlled the Western console market; even into the mid-2000s, console gaming remained an "industry where Japanese products and corporations are the dominant if not hegemonic influence" (Consalvo, 2006, p.119). This period of dominance is part of a wider story whereby Japanese companies, having long aspired to an "odourless" anonymity for their products (Koichi, 2002, p.33), began embracing and trading on the suddenly saleable idea of "Japaneseness" (Allison, 2006, pp.115-6). In the 1990s, however, this shift was still underway, and while localizers[1] were not as intent on deodorizing Japanese games as they had been in the 1980s, many Western players would have been surprised to learn that a blockbuster like *Resident Evil* (1996) had come from Japan – which only heightened the pleasure for cognoscenti. As this suggests, and as Chan (2007) and Consalvo (2007) insist, games like *Symphony of the Night* are not expressions of some essential or innate Japanese sensibility but products of a global(ised) imaginary, implicated in complex circuits of influence and exchange.

Of course, these circuits are always subject to "friction" as exchanges "are facilitated, channeled and restricted" by various human and nonhuman actors (Carlson & Corliss, 2011, p.78). There were often large gaps between the Japanese, American and European releases of even the most anticipated games in the 1990s (Newman, 2008, p.156), and many titles were simply considered too Japanese for release in the West (Carlson & Corliss, 2011). With the internet in its infancy, fans were dependent for news of such games on magazine coverage, which, as Newman (2008) notes, spurred some readers to move "beyond lusting over screenshots and… remedy the iniquity of the situation" by importing games themselves (p.157). Running these titles entailed either buying Japanese hardware or else "modify(ing)… consoles, opening them and soldering circuitry to override the technological lockouts" — an operation that voided the warranty and was illegal in some territories (Consalvo, 2006, p.132). With no localizers to "reterritorialize" and "mediate" these games (Carlson & Corliss, 2011, p.72), print publications stepped in to fill the void. Helping readers to select and play import games by way of reviews, guides and translations, magazines also facilitated interpretation and appreciation via articles situating these strange games within a wider culture and history. In so doing they helped to consolidate a subculture characterized by longing, fascination and literal and figurative mistranslation. If, as Sedgwick argues, camp involves projection and productive confusion, desire and decoding, this was fertile camping ground indeed.

SCRIPTING A SUBCULTURE

It's to one of these magazines, *Sega Saturn Magazine* (hereafter *SSM*), that I'd like to turn now, considering how it equipped English readers to construct a subcultural identity. As Hills (2002) argues, it is often the case with studies of fandom that "academics' fan experiences (are) implied in their work" rather than being explicitly acknowledged and interrogated (p.22). For him such a step is necessary in order to effect an "opening (of) the 'subjective' and the intimately personal up to the cultural contexts in which it is formed and experienced" (ibid. p.72). With this in mind, I feel beholden both to acknowledge my own experience as a white, British, middle class, Saturn-owning, *SSM*-reading teenage boy, and to try and contextualize this experience. Viewed this way, my love for the Saturn is revealed to have been shaped by corporate hierarchies, the "glocal" flows of entertainment product, intellectual property law and the peculiarities of particular hardware platforms: my initial desire to buy (or rather, be bought) the console was piqued by Capcom's *X-Men: Children of the Atom* (1995), a Japanese 2D fighting game featuring characters licensed from the American comics company Marvel. That *X-Men* was a Saturn exclusive is, in some ways, a result of Sega's failure to anticipate the speed with which 3D gaming would catch on; where the PlayStation was designed for 3D (an inspired but risky decision, as Asakura (2000) explains), as was the Nintendo 64, the Saturn was conceived with 2D titles in mind. This contributed to its comparative failure in the UK, where around 300 games were released for the platform — less than a quarter of the number published in Japan (Satakore, 2013). As domestic releases dwindled, *SSM* increasingly turned to import coverage, inspiring many UK Saturn owners, myself included, to mod their consoles.

As Newman (2008, p.31) suggests, a key function of console-specific magazines is to fuel so-called "fanboyism": loyalty to one platform and, perhaps as importantly, scorn for its competitors. The phenomenon is understandably common among youths who, bought one console by their parents, are driven to defend their choice as legitimate and autonomous. Thus SSM portrays its audience as a discriminating community of elite players, unjustly marginalized by a mainstream bewitched by Sony's marketing spin; readers are told (of themselves) that "Saturn gamers value playability over graphics and demand the best" while PlayStation owners are content with "vast amounts of middle-of-the-road software" (Leadbetter, 1998, p.38). Key to the communal identity *SSM* constructs is the ability to acquire and appreciate Japanese titles like *Elevator Action Returns* — characterized, with distinctly camp hauteur, as "a cultish videogame… not likely to appeal to the masses" ("Review: Elevator Action Returns", 1998, p.69). Also central is a sense of martyrdom, of being unfairly deprived or maligned. Thus while *SSM* presents import gaming as a way for "game-starved European players" to access "a whole new dimension of gaming" ("Preview: Grandia Digital

Museum", 1998, p.40; "Review: Gun Griffon II", 1998, p.65), it is also shown to be fraught with frustration and risk. Like the subcultural talismans Hebdige (1979) analyses, Japanese games "take on a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, tokens of a self-imposed exile" (p.2), as articles foster a sense of solidarity underwritten by hardship: "ever slogged through a Japanese RPG for four hours straight, before accidentally selecting the 'Quit' option… ? Ever seen a grown man cry?" asks one preview ("Preview: Dragon Force II", 1998, p.30).

Japan itself assumes a number of contradictory roles and associations. Equating Japaneseness with authenticity, SSM privileges information obtained "straight (from) the source… Japan" ("Preview: Street Fighter Collection 2", 1998, p.30). Sega Europe, by contrast, is presented as inept and untrustworthy (e.g. "Q&A", 1998, p.40). As the place from whence new games come (albeit after an agonizing wait) Japan is also identified with the future; at the same time it is, unlike the novelty-obsessed "West", a place where "classic" genres, from 2D shooters to side-scrolling platformers, can flourish. Reverence for Japan, however, is not incompatible with ridicule. Rather "the weird and wonderful world of Nippon" is treated with a mixture of awe, incredulity and derisive amusement ("Preview: Choro Q", 1998, p.34). Harrison (2008) has argued that Japanese "misuse" of English, despite often striking native speakers as absurd, is in many instances attributable not to error but an aesthetic agenda with its own "internal logic" (pp.144-6); in SSM, however, such "Engrish" constructions are mocked with little consideration of their intended context and effect (e.g. Cutlack, 1998, p.61). The magazine's monthly "…And Finally" section, meanwhile, offers innuendo-laced profiles of games' heroines in which virtual bodies and Japanese sensibilities alike are subjected to prurient scrutiny, cementing a stereotypical identification of Japanese pop culture with perverse sexuality.

It is tempting to read this mixture of captivation and condescension as textbook *Orientalism* (Said, 2003): as was Said, we are dealing with the discursive production of an Oriental "Other" who functions "as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (p.3). Said, however, is primarily concerned with a body of nineteenth-century Franco-British writing addressing Islamic culture, and has reservations as to the broader applicability of his model (pp.16-18). Consalvo (2007) also cautions against uncritically applying Said's conclusions to video game fandom, arguing that while

> "Western interest in Japanese games and the game industry can include a certain element of exoticization… it is also as likely to include understanding, reworking, and identification. For some gamers, Japanese games are a delightful escape from more "normal" Western games…. (and) may be a source of affiliation and identification with a larger group or subculture (2007, p. 740).

Carlson and Corliss (2011) likewise observe that if cultural essentialism is at work when players are drawn to games they consider delightfully Japanese, it is also at work when localizers deem certain games inappropriate for a Western audience; at least in the former case we see a willingness to find ways to engage with and enjoy these objects, to fashion an "identity that resonates with difference" (pp.67, 63).

These accounts are perhaps too ready to assume that subcultural affiliations underwritten by exotic commodities involve meaningful identification. This is a shame, for while it is easy to applaud the refunctioning of mainstream texts by a marginalized audience, the division of power in the case of imported video games is not so straightforwardly asymmetric, and raises some awkward but interesting questions regarding the ethics and dynamics of camp cultural appropriation. One of the virtues of Sedgwick's (2003) account of the camp consumer's desire to "assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer an inchoate self" (p.149) is that it does not presume the consumer will show respect for the provenance or proper context of the object they fix upon. Instead, it suggests a pragmatic, even self-serving motive; an eye to what that object can do for me, here and now.

For the subculture in question, Japanese video games provided an object capable of supporting various self-fashioning strategies. Of course, the stakes here were lower than for some of the groups Hebdige (1988) analyses, or indeed for those whose performances of camp style put them at risk of violent homophobic reprisal. The model, however, remains similar: cohering on the basis of "emphatically stated taste preferences" (ibid. p.30) this community refunctioned specific commodities as badges of identity and proved capable of acts (albeit small and self-interested ones) of sedition and protest, from petitioning publishers to willfully voiding warranties via mods. Playing Japanese games as an English Saturn owner may not seem as radical a repurposing as, say, a 1970s punk wearing a safety pin as jewelry, but rendering import titles viable still entailed various kinds of effort, from soldering circuit boards to writing guides to the hermeneutic labor involved in interpreting texts intended for a very different audience. It takes numerous actors to fit a game such as *Grandia* (1997) for camp adoration: its designers, certainly, but also those at Sega who declined to localize the expansive, ingenious game they had made, the importers who capitalized on this decision and the *SSM* journalists who canonized the title with a speed that speaks, at least in part, to its compatibility with their professional agenda (an exclusive, lauded in Japan and unavailable in Europe, *Grandia* was also a fanboy-pleasing testament to the Saturn's capabilities, coaxing some spectacular effects from the system's idiosyncratic architecture). Indeed, for proof that texts and commodities accrete meanings as they circulate one need only point to the way *Grandia*'s plot — which follows a globe-trotting band of adolescent treasure hunters — now serves as an allegory for the activities

1. Where translation attempts to account for linguistic differences, localization addresses cultural ones, adapting "images, animations, and overall design aesthetics, game mechanics and interface, narrative, and even button mapping" to fit different territories' standards and sensibilities (or the localizers' conceptions thereof) (Carlson & Corlis, 2011, p.64).

of the subculture that embraced it, colonial resonances and all. For players such as myself, dependent on guides like that published across multiple issues of *SSM*, it was less *Grandia*'s (near incomprehensible) narrative than its utility as a vehicle for speculation and projection that proved endearing.

If *Grandia* was a text this community of players cherished, we can learn just as much from what they rejected. United in its hostility to other gaming platforms, publishers' licensing policies and Western canons of taste, perhaps most striking is this subculture's disregard for conventional notions of maturity and masculinity; as games were beginning to adopt the aesthetic of self-serious cinematic realism still prevalent today, these players sought refuge in a foreign, florid, juvenile universe of skyscraping robots, androgynous vampires and laser-spitting dragons, while aligning themselves with some unexpectedly queer archetypes (epicure, scholar, martyr). As Litvak (1997) argues, camp connoisseurship has always entailed an ability to find things simultaneously tacky and ravishing, an appreciation for the piquancy and pungency of "gamier" cultural dishes (pp.82-3). His metaphor is felicitously appropriate for this subculture's celebration of defiantly "gamey" video games, which might be seen to presage the "indie" scene's championing of abstract and putatively outmoded styles in recent years. Nor is this the only respect in which it invites us to reconsider today's gaming landscape. For, as I will suggest in the remainder of the article, the structure of this subculture has interesting implications in an era when game fandom may be drifting toward kitsch.

A KITSCHER FUTURE?

In a recent preview of the Xbox One game *Dead Rising 3,* a Canadian-made sequel to a franchise that originated in Japan, Matulef (2013) sounds an increasingly familiar note of consternation. While conceding that "in many ways *Dead Rising 3* looks like a distinct improvement over its sandbox curio predecessors" he worries that "some of (the series') flavour has been lost in translation", lamenting the loss of a certain "uniquely Japanese campiness".

The fond but patronizing tone echoes *SSM*, but is inflected, here, by a sense that campy Japanese curios may be dying out. If *Symphony of the Night* and *Grandia* reflect circumstances peculiar to the 1990s, then *Dead Rising 3* functions similarly for today. The series' east-to-west development trajectory hints at the Japanese industry's waning influence, a decline dateable to Sega's exit from the console market and the subsequent launch of Microsoft's Xbox, which was succeeded by the Xbox 360 in 2005 and the Xbox One in 2013. A success in North America and Europe, the 360 performed feebly in Japan, where few players enjoy the sorts of US-made shooters with which the platform has become synonymous. As a result, Microsoft has classed Japan among the "tier two" countries that will have to wait until some as yet undetermined point in 2014 to receive the Xbox One (Davies, 2013).

Like its direct rival, Sony's PlayStation 4, the One is a PC–like system, a departure from the tradition of consoles constructed from bespoke components with their own idiosyncrasies. Based on the established X86 standard, these new systems allow developers to continue using familiar tools and methodologies, an important concern given the logistical challenges and financial risks game development entails today (Newman, 2013, p.38).

Considering *Dead Rising 3*, various ways of framing a shift toward kitsch suggest themselves. One might discuss genre, technology, graphical vocabularies, economics, national character or auteur creativity. I want, however, to take a different approach, drawing on Sedgwick's (2008) account of the dynamics of "kitsch-attribution". For Sedgwick, kitsch(ing) entails an attributor contemptuously imagining a less discerning consumer, capable of appreciating the kitsch (or kitsched) object guilelessly (p.156). Kitsch, in other words, is that which we judge ourselves to be above, but which we can imagine other "unenlightened" people enjoying (p.155). If cynical, corner-cutting game publishers are guilty of kitsching, then, so too are those fans, critics and developers who partake in the sort of snobbery Sedgwick describes, disparaging the contemporary by comparison with the putatively classic in a fashion consistent with hipster culture's celebration of the "authenticity" of bygone forms and styles (Kinzey, 2012, pp.76-77)[2]. For Sedgwick (2008), such judgments are always suspicious, bespeaking a perceived susceptibility to being "kitsched" oneself (p.153) — a point Hills (2002) echoes in observing that scholars' discussions of fandom are wont to lapse into bids to shore up a particular self–image (pp.73-77). Who am I, after all, to declare Grandia gloriously camp and *Call of Duty: Ghosts* (2013) merely kitsch? If, as Dyer (2002) affirms, camp is about "how you respond to things" as much as "qualities actually inherent in those things" (p.52) this judgment is open to question, and my vested interests (from cultural capital to potentially saleable games and magazines) only render it more so. Fortunately, Sedgwick hints at a more productive and inclusive approach to discussing kitsch: shifting the onus away from texts per se and onto the forecasting and "cynical manipulation" of consumer taste (2008, p.155), she suggests the importance of taking modes of monitoring and modeling audience behavior into account.

This approach has particular relevance for games. For while other phenomena, from downloadable content to gestural interfaces, have received more attention, the widespread adoption of quantitative analytics has had a considerable impact on the direction of the industry in recent years. It is now comparatively easy to telemetrically monitor what, when, how and with whom we play, and such information is increasingly important in determining how games are balanced, regulated and monetized (Bramwell, 2012), much to the chagrin of developers who fear for their creative autonomy (Hurley, 2012; Whitson, 2012). To be sure, online spaces for fan commentary and critique have also multiplied — and, as BioWare's alteration

2. Kinzey (2012) in fact draws parallels between hipsterdom and camp as portrayed in Sontag's seminal 1964 essay (pp.94, 96); Sedgwick would probably identify the phenomena he highlights with kitsch rather than camp however.

of *Mass Effect 3*'s (2012) ending demonstrates, developers monitor these channels too. As Kerr (2011) suggests, however, publishers tend to set more store by the vast amounts of "implicitly gathered data" collected without players' conscious participation (p.29).

This is in part because telemetric data collection, like the forms of biometric research with which it is increasingly supplemented, claims to eliminate the distortion presented by more explicit modes of player research, which for McAllister (2012) are hamstrung by the fact that players "often lie", whether "to please the person asking them" or because "they've fabricated something in their mind, perhaps, or they've remembered it differently". McAllister's comment foregrounds the fact that these systems are, in a sense, directed toward the same questions as camp: they grapple with the difference between acquired and innate preference, pose and practice, private and public, the visceral and the intellectual, authorial intention and audience reception. The crucial difference, though, is that quantitative analysis often dismisses as distorting the very things camp revels in — reflexivity, performance, mediation, ambiguity, irony.

As we have seen, camp fandom thrives on noisy and attenuated channels of (mis)information. It is a speculative, projective, messy process, involving happy accidents and chance discoveries, dependent upon imperfect correspondences between consumers, producers and objects. As Sedgwick (2008) puts it, camp asks "what if: What if the right audience for this were exactly me?" (p.156, emphasis original). Such was true of the fans I have discussed, who evolved strategies for appreciating texts never intended for them. Metrical analysis, by contrast, too often aims to eliminate noise, creating ever-closer couplings of demand and supply, expectation and experience, stimulus and response. In the process potentially rich objects (which richness is neither wholly inherent nor wholly granted, but emerges from the encounter between object and audience (Sedgwick, 2003, p.149)) risk being kitsched, stripped of anything that might alienate or confuse their projected audience. That the "ever closing feedback loop of game design" (p.316) initiated by such systems creates opportunities for exploitation is amply demonstrated by Schüll's (2012) discussion of the gambling industry; perhaps equally worrying is the prospect of metrics pushing even well-intentioned designers toward results that are easily quantifiable and reproducible, compromising the ingenuity and vitality key to gaming's camp appeal.

But I am in danger, here, of indulging the paranoid tendencies to which, for Sedgwick (2008), camp provides a corrective (pp.147-9). The present is not so bleak as I have perhaps made it seem, nor was the past so rosy. It is neither possible nor desirable to recreate the conditions that nurtured a camp subculture among 1990s console gamers, based as that culture was on technological limitations, underdeveloped channels of communication and distribution and the problematic fetishization of reified notions of

Japaneseness. Equally, the trajectory from camp to kitsch that my title proposes is too reductive. If that title is framed as a question, it is because I intend not merely to leave my proposition open to dispute, but to highlight the pernicious appeal of such binarized thinking, underwritten as it tends to be by uninterrogated assumptions and attachments. For if new technologies facilitate kitsching, they also have other uses. Independent games are thriving thanks to online promotion and distribution platforms, middleware technologies are enabling amateurs to code innovative, personal games, and while player research can have a normative effect it can also testify to the complexity and variety of gameplay experience (Lindley & Nacke, 2009). Looking back at bygone gaming subcultures, in short, need not make us too nostalgic —but it should remind us of the importance of providing spaces for new, queer forms of play to flourish.

REFERENCES

Allison, A. (2006). *Millennial Monsters.* Berkley: University of California Press.

Asakura, R. (2000). *Revolutionaries at Sony: the Making of the Sony PlayStation and the Visionaries who Conquered the World of Video Games.* New York; London: McGraw Hill.

Bergman, D. (1993). Introduction. D. Bergman, (Ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (pp.3-18). Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bramwell, T. (2012, August 8). Codemasters responds to criticism about loss of in-car view in Grid 2. *Eurogamer.* Retrieved from http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2012-08-08-codemasters-responds-to-criticism-about-loss-of-in-car-view-in-grid-2

Carlson, R. & Corliss, J. (2011). Imagined Commodities: Video Game Localization and Mythologies of Cultural Difference. *Games and Culture*, 6(1), pp.61-82.

Chan, D. (2007). The Cultural Economy of Ludic Superflatness. Proceedings of the Digital Games Research Association Conference 2007: Situated Play, pp.783-788. Retrieved from www.digra.org/dl/db/07311.51279.pdf

Cleto, F. (1999). *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject.* University of Edinburgh Press: Edinburgh.

Consalvo, M. (2006). *Console Video Games and Global Corporations: Creating a Hybrid Culture.* New Media & Society, 8, pp.117-137.

Consalvo, M. (2007). *Visiting the Floating World: Tracing a Cultural History of Games Through Japan and America.* Proceedings of the Digital Games Research Association Conference 2007: Situated Play, pp.736-741. Retrieved from http://lmc.gatech.edu/~cpearce3/DiGRA07/Proceedings/096.pdf

Cutlack, G. (1998, September). Showcase: Radiant Silvergun. *Sega Saturn Magazine*, 36, pp.60-67.

Davies, C. (2013, July 3). Xbox One Japan launch tipped for early 2014: begs leniency in the meantime. *Slashgear.* Retrieved from http://www.slashgear.com/xbox-one-japan-launch-tipped-for-early-2014-begs-leniency-in-the-meantime-03288865/

Dyer, R. (2002). *The Culture of Queers.* London; New York: Routledge.

Gigante, D. (2005). *Taste: a Literary History.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Grandia, *Game Arts*, Japan, 1997.

Halperin, D.M. (1995). *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Harrison, T. (2008). *21st Century Japan: a New Sun Rising.* Tonawamda; London: Black Rose Books.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: the Meaning of Style.* London: Routledge.

Hebdige, D. (1988). *Hiding in the Light: on Images and Things.* London: Routledge.

Hills, M. (2002). *Fan Cultures.* London: Routledge.

Hurley, L. (2012, June 26). Hitman: Absolution director: "20% of players will see the last level". *Official PlayStation Magazine.* Retrieved from http://www.officialplaystationmagazine.co.uk/2012/06/26/hitman-absolution-director-20-of-the-players-will-see-the-last-level/

Isherwood, C. (1954). *The World in the Evening.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kerr, A. (2011). Player production and innovation in online games – time for new rules? In G. Crawford, B. Light and V. Gosling, (Eds.), *Online gaming: production, play and sociality* (pp.25-39). Oxon: Routledge.

Kinzey, J. (2012). *The Sacred and the Profane: an Investigation of Hipsters.* Arlesford: Zero Books.

Koichi, I. (2002). *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism.* Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Lash, S. (2002). *Critique of Information.* London: Sage.

Leadbetter, R. (1998, June). Virtua writer. *Sega Saturn Magazine*, 32, pp.36-39.

Lindley, C.A. & Nacke, L. (2009). Affective ludology, flow and immersion in a first-person shooter: measurement of player experience. *Loading...* 3 (5). Retrieved from http://journals.sfu.ca/loading/index.php/loading/article/view/72

Litvak, J. (1997). Strange Gourmet: Taste, Waste, Proust. In E.K. Sedgwick, (Ed.), *Novel gazing: queer readings in fiction* (pp.74-93). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ludlam, C. (1992). *Ridiculous Theatre – Scourge of Folly: The Essays and Opinions of Charles Ludlam.* New York: Theatre Communications Group.

McAllister, G. (2012, January 26). Testing games with science. Eurogamer Podcast [Audio Podcast]. Retrieved from http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2012-01-26- eurogamer-net-podcast-97-testing-games-with-science

Meyer, M. (1994). Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp. In M. Meyer, (Ed.), *The politics and poetics of camp* (pp.1-22). London: Routledge.

Matulef, J. (2013, June 13). Bigger really is better: Dead rising 3 preview. *Eurogamer.* Retrieved from http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2013-06-13-dead-rising-3-preview

Newman, J. (2008). *Playing with Videogames.* London: Routledge.

Newman, J. (2013). *Videogames.* London; New York: Routledge.

Preview: Choro Q. (1998, June). *Sega Saturn Magazine*, 32, pp.34-35.

Preview: Dragon Force II. (1998, July). *Sega Saturn Magazine,* 33, 30-31.

Preview: Grandia Digital Museum. (1998, August). *Sega Saturn Magazine*, 34, 40-41.

Preview: Street Fighter Collection 2. (1998, June). *Sega Saturn Magazine,* 32, pp.30-31.

Q&A. (1998, June). *Sega Saturn Magazine*, 32, p.40.

Review: Elevator Action Returns. (1998, June). *Sega Saturn Magazine*, 32, p.69.

Review: Gun Griffon II. (1998, July). *Sega Saturn Magazine*, 33, p.65.

Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism.* St. Ives: Penguin.

Satakore (2013). List of Sega Saturn games. Retrieved from http://www.satakore.com/sega-saturn-complete-game,,1,,0,,1.html

Schüll, N.D. (2012). *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Sedgwick, E.K. (2003). *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* New York; London: Routledge.

Sedgwick, E.K. (2008). *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley; London: University of California Press.

Sontag, S. (1964). *Notes on Camp.* Retrieved from http://www.math.utah.edu/~lars/Sontag::Notes%20on%20camp.pdf

Stafford, B.M. (2007), *Echo Objects: the Cognitive Work of Images.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Whitson, J.R. (2012). *Game Design by Numbers: Instrumental Play and the Quantitative Shift in the Digital Game Industry.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Carleton University, Ottawa.

LUDOGRAPHY

Call of Duty: Ghosts, Infinity Ward, USA, 2013.

Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, Konami Computer Entertainment Tokyo, Japan, 1997.

Final Fantasy VII, Square Product Development Division, Japan, 1996.

Mass Effect 3, BioWare, Canada, 2012.

Resident Evil, Capcom, Japan, 1996.

Super Metroid, Nintendo R&D1/Intelligent Systems, Japan, 1994.

X-Men: Children of the Atom, Capcom, Japan, 1995.